



United States Department of the Interior
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DOLAM OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES (OPM) MEMORANDUM NO. 06-52

Subject: Aircraft Mishap Notification, Investigation and Reporting

Effective Date: January 1, 2006

Supersedes: OPM 05-52 dated January 1, 2005

Distribution: A, B, & C

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.1 Purpose. This OPM establishes policy for aircraft mishap notification, investigation and reporting. It replaces policy stated in the current Departmental Manual 352 DM 6 and the *Aviation Mishap Notification, Investigation and Reporting Handbook* until such time the new DM chapter is approved.

.2 Authority. This policy is established by the Associate Director, Aviation Management (DOI AM), National Business Center under authority of 112 DM 12, 350 DM 1 and Secretarial Order 3250 dated September 30, 2003.

.3 Policy.

- A.** Replace 352 DM 6 temporarily with this guidance until the revised DM chapter is approved and released.
- B.** Insert Appendix 1 of this OPM as new policy for aircraft mishap notification, investigation and reporting.
- C.** This guidance also supersedes the *Aviation Mishap Notification, Investigation And Reporting Handbook*.

/s/ Mark L. Bathrick
Associate Director

Aircraft Mishap Notification, Investigation and Reporting

6.1 **Purpose.** This chapter establishes procedures for the notification and reporting of aircraft accidents and incidents occurring during Interior aviation activities.

6.2 **Authority.** Title 49 USC, Chapter 11 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) establishes the authority for the NTSB and the conduct of aviation accident investigations. 49 CFR 830 establishes the notification and reporting procedures for all civil and public aircraft accidents and incidents. 41 CFR Part 102-33 Management of Government Aircraft establishes policy for the management of all federally funded aviation activities of executive agencies of the U.S. Government. 41 CFR Part 102-33, sections 102-33.180 and 102-33.185 address standards that must be established or required for flight program safety and standards for responding to aircraft accidents and incidents. Departmental Manual 112 DM 12 delegates to the Department of the Interior, Aviation Management (DOI AM) the responsibility to establish and manage a Department-wide accident/incident and aviation hazard reporting system, to investigate all aircraft mishaps occurring in Departmental aviation operations in cooperation with the National Transportation Safety Board, and to represent the Department on all aircraft accident investigations where Interior has involvement, as specified by the DOI AM Associate Director.

6.3 **Responsibility.** In an effort to prevent future aircraft mishaps, it is the responsibility of all Interior employees to report known aircraft accidents, aviation hazards, and maintenance deficiencies. It is the Department of the Interior's responsibility to investigate Interior aircraft mishaps using one of the following investigation procedures.

A. On-site investigations will be conducted whenever possible for all aircraft accidents and selected incidents with potential.

B. Limited investigations will be conducted for selected incidents with potential. A limited investigation will not normally include a visit to the incident site.

C. Administrative investigations will be conducted for reports of conditions, observances, acts, maintenance problems, or circumstances, which may have the potential to cause an aircraft mishap.

6.4 **Applicability.** Provisions established herein are applicable for all aircraft owned, operated by, or under the operational control of the Department of the Interior. Included are those aircraft contracted, leased, or operated under the provisions of an Aircraft Rental Agreement (ARA), as well as for aircraft owned by Departmental employees when operated on official business. Aircraft mishap reports cannot be used in lieu of reports prescribed in 451 DM 1 (Tort Claims Against the United States) and 485 DM 5 (Program Evaluations).

6.5 **Aircraft Mishap Notification.** Mishaps involving aircraft under the operational control of the Department of the Interior that result in an accident, incident involving damage or injury, or overdue aircraft suspected of having an accident shall be reported to the DOI AM Aviation Safety Office immediately by the most expeditious means available. For notification after office hours a 24-hour aircraft accident reporting hotline is available at 1-888-464-7427. Individuals making the initial notification may use the "Aircraft Accident Checklist" published in the Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Guide and Checklist (Appendix 1) as a guide.

Upon receipt of notification of an accident, incident involving damage or injury, or overdue aircraft suspected of having an accident, DOI AM Aviation Safety will immediately notify the respective Bureau Aviation Program Manager or Bureau Aviation Safety Manager and the appropriate Regional Office of the NTSB and provide all accident information available at that time.

The SafeCom form (OAS-34/FS 5700-14), Appendix 2, should be used to report other safety-related circumstances having the potential to cause an aircraft accident or incident such as hazards, maintenance problems, or airspace conflicts. Safecom's may also be submitted electronically to the Safecom website at: <http://www.safecom.gov>.

6.6 Mishap Response Plan. Response to an aircraft mishap requires preplanned actions. Time is an extremely critical factor in responding to emergency situations. Unnecessary delays in responding to a mishap may adversely affect the survival of the crewmembers and passengers. All Interior entities utilizing aviation resources (other than scheduled air carriers) will prepare a mishap response plan for its flight operations that includes guidance in the following areas: rescue operations, site safety precautions, wreckage security, news releases, evidence preservation, and other actions necessary to support an investigation. The purpose of the plan is to provide direction and reduce confusion when responding to an aircraft mishap. The Interagency Aviation Mishap Response Guide and Checklist (NFES 2659) is available as a resource to assist in the development of a mishap response plan.

A. Rescue Operations. Rescue personnel should do whatever is necessary to preserve life and property. Whenever possible, document and/or photograph the location of wreckage that must be disturbed in order to carry out rescue and fire suppression activities.

B. Site Safety. Aircraft mishap sites can be hazardous for many reasons. Personnel involved in the initial rescue and recovery may be exposed to adverse terrain or climatic conditions, hazardous materials (HAZMAT), sharp or heavy objects, and disease. It is important to exercise good judgment, utilize protective equipment and clothing, and exercise extreme caution when working at the mishap site.

C. Site Security. Treat the mishap area like a crime scene and arrange for 24-hour security. Wreckage and cargo should not be disturbed except to remove injured persons, prevent further damage, or protect the public. When it is necessary to move the wreckage, mail, or cargo, prepare and/or take sketches, descriptive notes, photographs, or video footage. Determine if there are hazardous materials on the aircraft and if a spill has occurred request a HAZMAT Response Team. De-activate the emergency locator transmitter (ELT) if installed.

D. Evidence Preservation. Perishable evidence (e.g. evidence that may melt, evaporate, or blow away) should be documented and secured. Witnesses should be identified as soon as possible. Aviation life support equipment (ALSE), particularly flight helmets, that has been involved in either an Incident-With-Potential (IWP) or an accident shall be quarantined, regardless of condition, until released by the NTSB or DOI Investigator-In-Charge (IIC). The IIC will determine if flight helmets require a technical inspection and if necessary arrange for damaged flight helmets to be inspected by a technically qualified person before that equipment is returned to service.

E. Witnesses. Anyone who may have witnessed the incident or accident should be identified and located as quickly as possible. Information such as the witnesses name, address, telephone number, e-mail address or organization assigned to will be extremely helpful during the investigation phase of the event. Additionally, a written statement from each individual

involved should be completed as quickly as possible commensurate with injuries or the condition of the witness. If possible, witnesses should be separated and all efforts should be made to prevent discussion between the witnesses until after their signed written statements have been completed.

F. Emergency Contact List. Telephone numbers or radio contacts must be available for responders to notify fire and rescue, medical, law enforcement, flight following, and the DOI AM Aviation Safety Manager.

G. News Releases. Requests from the news media regarding the mishap should be directed to the National Transportation Safety Board's Office of Public Affairs at (202) 314-6100. Additionally, the NTSB also has a web site available to assist journalists at <http://www.nts.gov/Events/journalist/default.htm>. Interior employees should not make statements to the news media regarding contributing factors or probable cause.

6.7 Aircraft Mishap On-Site Investigations. Interior aircraft mishap investigation activities shall be given priority over all other investigations of the same mishap except for National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigations. The DOI AM Aviation Safety Manager will be responsible for coordinating DOI investigations with the NTSB and will serve as the DOI point of contact for NTSB aircraft mishap investigations. Interior aircraft mishaps will be investigated in accordance with DOI AM Instruction 220-1. National Transportation Safety Board investigations are subject to the rules and regulations of the NTSB.

A. Investigator-In-Charge (IIC). The DOI AM Aviation Safety Manager will designate a DOI Air Safety Investigator (ASI) as the Interior Investigator-In-Charge (IIC). The DOI IIC organizes, conducts, and controls the Interior investigation. The DOI IIC shall assume responsibility for the supervision and coordination of all resources and the activities of all Interior personnel involved in the investigation. When the National Transportation Safety Board IIC is conducting the investigation, the DOI IIC will serve as a party to the NTSB investigation, assisting the NTSB IIC and representing Interior.

B. DOI Investigation Team. The DOI AM Aviation Safety Manager will select Interior investigation team members based on the complexities of the mishap. Bureaus experiencing the mishap should designate a representative team member to work under the direction of the DOI AM IIC. To ensure an impartial investigation, no member will have a personal interest in the mishap.

C. Bureau Responsibilities. The Bureau representative shall participate in the conduct of the mishap investigation as well as provide support to the Investigation Team. The DOI AM IIC, in coordination with the DOI AM Aviation Safety Manager, may request additional Bureau members to conduct the on-site investigation. Each team member's travel and per diem costs shall be borne by their respective Bureau/Office/Service. Each team member shall be under the direction and control of the DOI AM IIC during the field phase of the investigation.

D. Vendor Responsibilities. The vendor of an aircraft involved in a mishap or incident with potential occurring in support of Interior aviation activities shall secure and then subsequently provide the investigation team with all appropriate operator records, reports, internal documents, and memoranda dealing with the aircraft and employee(s) involved in the mishap. Such support shall be addressed in the appropriate Aircraft Rental Agreement (ARA) or other contractual agreements as appropriate.

E. Other Government Agency Investigations.

Public Law 103-411 and subsequent modifications assigns responsibility to the National Transportation Safety Board for investigating or causing to be investigated all public aircraft accidents. Interior will fully cooperate and assist the NTSB. Additionally, the DOI AM Associate Director will ensure an Interior investigation is conducted for the purpose of accident prevention. The Interior investigation will supplement the NTSB investigation to the extent necessary to prevent future mishaps.

Where other Government agencies have operational control or jurisdiction over the investigation of an aircraft mishap or incident with potential where Interior personnel or interests are involved, the DOI AM Associate Director may designate an ASI or other qualified investigator to represent the Department of the Interior. Other bureau personnel may also attend non-DOI investigations as a bureau liaison and may serve as a “party” to the investigation at the discretion of the NTSB. Note, that the NTSB defines the term “party” as “...those persons, government agencies, companies, and associations whose employees, functions, activities, or products were involved in the accident or incident and who can provide suitable qualified technical personnel actively to assist in the investigation.”

When extensive cooperative aviation activities are involved (e.g., USDA-Forest Service) an interagency agreement for the joint investigation of aircraft mishaps shall be completed.

F. Military Aircraft. Military forces have authority and control over their aircraft in the event of an accident. Close coordination between the DOI AM, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the military authority involved is essential when a joint investigation is required. All correspondence relating to Interior’s involvement in the accident shall be addressed to the DOI AM Associate Director.

6.8 Aircraft Mishap Initial Alert, Preliminary and Interim Report, and Mishap File.

A. Aircraft Mishap Initial Alert. The DOI AM Aviation Safety Office will make every effort to issue an Aircraft Mishap Initial Alert via e-mail within 24 hours of notification of a known or suspected aircraft accident. In some cases, aircraft mishap initial alerts may be delayed due to remote locations and inadequate communication capabilities.

B. Preliminary Report. The NTSB IIC will generally post a preliminary aircraft accident report to their web site within 5 to 7 days following an accident. The NTSB’s aviation accident database contains information from 1962 and later about civil aviation accidents and selected incidents within the United States, its territories and possessions, and in international waters. The Accident Database & Synopses web page is located at <http://www2.nts.gov/ntsb/query.asp>.

C. Interim Report. A written interim accident report, that may contain new information that has not yet been disseminated via previous alerts or the NTSB’s preliminary report, will be released within 90 days of an aircraft accident with the concurrence of the NTSB IIC.

D. Mishap File. An aircraft mishap file will be created for all Interior on-site and limited investigations by the DOI AM Aviation Safety Office. The aircraft mishap file will include information of interest to Interior that may not be addressed in the National Transportation Safety Board’s accident investigation report. Following receipt of the NTSB’s accident investigation report, the DOI AM Associate Director will forward the NTSB report and the DOI

aircraft mishap file to the Director of the bureau experiencing the mishap.

E. Release of Information. ASIs or other investigators, including all parties to the investigation, shall not make public their own opinions, conclusions, or recommendations in their capacity as a member of the investigation team. Information received as a result of participation in a National Transportation Safety Board investigation shall be handled in accordance with NTSB instruction 830.13, *Flow and Dissemination of Accident or Incident Information*. Specifically, items such as photographs, factual data, or any documentation directly related to the investigation shall not be released until the DOI AM IIC complies with NTSB 830.13.

6.9 Use of Aircraft Mishap Files and SafeCom Information.

A. General. When requested by the head of a parallel Interior investigation group, the DOI AM Aviation Safety Manager may release facts relating to the mishap, after coordination with the National Transportation Safety Board. Privacy information and confidential witness statements shall be withheld. While the mishap facts are provided to preclude unnecessary duplication of on-site investigation efforts, the parallel investigation group must reach its own conclusions pertaining to personal liability and fault.

B. Prohibited Use. Aircraft mishap file and SafeCom information is not intended to fix blame or to be utilized in disciplinary action against any employee. Its sole purpose is for mishap prevention. Use of this information for any other purpose is prohibited. The aircraft mishap file and SafeCom information shall not be used:

(1) As evidence in determining misconduct, which may result in disciplinary action against agency personnel.

(2) As evidence to assert claims on behalf of the Government.

(3) As evidence to determine the liability of the Government for property damage, injuries, or death.

(4) In any other punitive or administrative action, including airman or maintenance certification enforcement proceedings, taken by other agencies of the United States Government.

C. Authorized Use. Aircraft mishap files and SafeCom information may be used in accordance with 351 DM 3.5E, *Suspension/Revocation of a DOI Qualification Card*, and in conjunction with Pilot Review Boards.

6.10 Information Disclosure. The DOI AM Aviation Safety Office is the Custodian of Record for Interior mishap information. Release of information regarding Interior accidents and incidents shall be subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act, as amended, and the Privacy Act of 1974. All requests for copies of the DOI AM aircraft mishap files shall be referred to the DOI AM Freedom of Information Act Officer for action. Requests for copies of the National Transportation Safety Board's accident investigation reports shall be referred to Public Inquiries, National Transportation Safety Board, 409 L'Enfant Plaza East, SW, Washington, DC 20594-0003.

6.11 Interior Aircraft Mishap Review Board. An Interior Aircraft Mishap Review Board (AMRB) is responsible for developing mishap prevention recommendation for all Interior accidents and selected incidents with potential. Specific responsibilities, functions and procedures to be followed are in accordance with DOI AM Instruction 220-1.

Aircraft Accident Checklist

DOI-AM/USFS 1-888-4MISHAP

(Do not delay initial report by trying to fill in all the blanks)

1. Point of Contact Information		
a. Name		c. Duty Position:
b. Phone Numbers		d. Address:
Work:	Cell:	
Fax:	Home:	e. E-mail:
2. Accident Information		
a. Aircraft Registration/Tail Number	Type of Aircraft	Color
b. Date and Time of Accident		
c. Location of Aircraft (Grid, Lat/Log, Reference to Known Point)		
d. Hazardous Materials Involved? (Explosives, Radioactive Materials, etc.)		
e. Witnesses identified and statements requested?		
f. Accident Site Secured?		Photos Taken?
g. Flight Data Recorder Secured? (If applicable)		ELT Deactivated?
h. Total Number of Personnel Involved		
Number of Fatalities		Number of Injuries
3. Accident Description (type of mission, what happened, weather, extent of damage, etc.)		
4. Admin Information		
a. Aircraft Owner		b. Operator
c. Pilot in Command		
d. Point of Last Departure		e. Destination
f. Route of Flight		g. Fuel on Board
h. Nearest Commercial Airport		i. Suitable Helicopter Landing Site
j. Other		

Aircraft Accident Checklist

Safety Communiqué Form

		REPORTED BY: (optional) Name: E-Mail: Phone: Cell Phone: Pager: Organization: Organization Other: Date Submitted: mm/dd/yyyy	
EVENT			
Date: mm/dd/yyyy	Local Time: hhmm	Injuries: Y/N	Damage: Y/N
State:	Location: (Airport, City. Lat/Long or Fire Name)		
<u>Operational Control:</u> Agency: Region: Unit:			
MISSION (* see look-up tables)			
Type: *		Other:	
Procurement: *		Other:	
Persons Onboard:		Special Use: Y/N	Hazardous Materials: Y/N
Departure Point:		Destination	
AIRCRAFT (* see look-up tables)			
Type: *	Tail #	Manufacturer: *	Model:
Owner/Operator:		Pilot:	
NARRATIVE: (A brief explanation of the event) <div style="height: 150px; border: 1px solid black;"></div>			
CORRECTIVE ACTION: (What was done to correct the problem) <div style="height: 150px; border: 1px solid black;"></div>			